

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

www.iowadnr.com

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[Note: Fishing reports will be released every other week into the fall.]

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BRING ON THE BATS

By Joe Wilkinson
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Sloshing through the shallow stream, Darryl Howell unrolled the net behind him. Suspended from tall post on each side, it resembled a midstream badminton court. After sunset here at Backbone State Park, this net would be snagging bats, not birdies.

“It’s the same sort of mist net used for birds and birdbanding,” explains Howell, senior environmental specialist with the Department of Natural Resources. “Set across streams or trails, bats sometimes don’t detect it, or will try to fly through and become entangled.”

Later, in the dark, he retrieved his catch. Three bats were in his mesh bag as he climbed the weedy bank to a picnic table, which tonight would double as a lab bench. “I look at forearm length, coloration, size, the ears,” offers Howell. “There are a number of characteristics that differentiate Iowa’s nine species. Here, the forearm length is 33 to 39 millimeters. This is a northern long-eared bat. These guys weigh about five or six grams (less than ¼ ounce). They are very tiny; one of the smallest bats we have (in Iowa).”

Tiny and delicate, it had pronounced ears and facial features. Its wings are almost translucent with Howell’s headlamp shining on them. Using a small pair of pliers and an even tinier ribbon of aluminum, he clamped on a leg band, to identify the bat if ever recaptured. Up close, the tiny mammal is hardly the fearsome creature of vampire movies or pest-tangled-in-your-hair legends. Unless you’re a bug. “They have ravenous appetites,” agrees Bruce Ehresman, a biologist with the DNR’s wildlife diversity program. A nursing little brown bat can eat up to 1,200 mosquito-sized insects in an

hour. She will basically eat her weight in insects in a night. They certainly help reduce mosquitos and other insects in your area.”

Bats, of course, get a bad rap because of the fear of rabies. Ehresman points out, though, that you stand a better chance of contracting the disease from your unvaccinated family pet than from a bat. “If you would notice a bat on the ground, during the day, obviously take precautions,” advises Ehresman. “But if you’re out in the evening and they are swooping around, they are after mosquitos. That’s a healthy situation.” With all the concern over West Nile Virus, Ehresman wonders whether bats may finally receive more credit for their role in controlling insect numbers. Bats are more visible, now, too, with young bats flying and feeding themselves a month or two after birth.

Back at the nets, Howell extricates another bat. And another. He is wants to dismantle the rig, but in the time it takes him to untangle one tiny winged warrior, another darts into it. The high pitched chirping indicates they are perturbed. Howell perseveres and the net is finally down. The first half dozen were all banded. The final few were each set on the rough bark of a nearby oak tree. As they reoriented themselves, they disappeared with a quick flutter of their dark wings.

Howell and our small after-dark audience had seen two of Iowa’s nine species this night. Most were the more common big brown bat. The northern long-eared bat was a bit of a coup, though. “It was considered a bit rare 20 years ago,” says Howell. “With more survey work, though, it seems to be a little more widely distributed and more common than we originally thought.”

That is one reason Howell emphasizes more study is needed on bats. Internationally and nationally, most bat species are diminishing. As large trees are removed, so too are bat nesting and loafing areas. “As those trees are removed, through windstorms or in conjunction with forestry practices, you can lose habitat,” cautions Howell. The two more common bats; the big brown and the little brown, do adapt better in proximity to humans. However, there are still wide gaps in Iowa’s ‘bat knowledge’. “With more monitoring, we could identify the species; their distribution and their relative abundance,” emphasizes Howell. “They are among the few night predators of insects. They take a lot of moths; corn borer moths, as well as mosquitos and other insects we may consider as pests. They benefit us from that standpoint.”

Sidebar: Bat House Prospects

One way to combat the flying hordes of mosquitos, as well as the decline in bat populations, is to establish bat houses. Biologists caution, though, not to expect miracles, if your area is ‘bat free’ as you begin. “It is difficult to attract them,” admits DNR wildlife diversity biologist Bruce Ehresman. “What does work well is attracting them to a bat house from an undesired location; such as an old house or other building. If they can be excluded from the building, with a bat house set on an outside wall or nearby, they could take up residence there. I haven’t had much success drawing bats into a new area.”

Most county conservation departments and DNR wildlife offices have design plans for simple bat houses.

Sidebar: Bat Primer

Though a couple other incidental sightings are reported over the years, Iowa is home to nine species of bats. All are insect eaters. They include; Little Brown, Northern (Long-eared), Silver-Haired, Eastern Pipistrelle, Big Brown, Red, Hoary, Evening and Indiana. The Indiana bat is on the federal endangered species list.

STATE FAIR VOTING TO SELECT PHOTOS FOR DNR CALENDAR

DES MOINES – State fairgoers visiting the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) building may vote on which photos go into the *Iowa Conservationist* calendar issue.

A set of four photos will be featured each of the 11 days of the fair. The final two photos will be selected by voting on the DNR's website.

“The calendar is one of our most popular issues because of the wonderful photography,” said Julie Sparks, editor of the DNR's bimonthly magazine.

Photos from nationally known Iowa wildlife photographers Ty Smedes and Roger Hill, along with DNR staff Clay Smith and Lowell Washburn, will be showcased. The photo receiving the highest number of votes each day will be included in the calendar.

Subscriptions to the *Iowa Conservationist* will be for sale during the fair at the reduced price of \$8 for one year. The *Iowa Conservationist* has been bringing hunting, fishing, camping and other conservation news to Iowans since 1942.

IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of August 5, 2003

www.iowadnr.com

This is the final weekly fishing report. The Iowa Fishing Report is released every other week from August into the fall. For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Southeast

Lake Darling (Washington): Catfish are still hungry in the late afternoon and evenings. The southeast shoreline seems to be the best area using chicken liver and stink baits.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Water levels are down for the rest of the summer to get the vegetation ready for the fall waterfowl migration. Wildlife employees opened the inlet structure to put some fresh water into the lake, so look for the fishing to pick up at the inlet. The construction work on the levee has started so watch out for heavy construction equipment on the Toolesboro road. The road will still be open for a while yet, but be careful.

Lake Geode (Henry): The rebuilding of the silt retention ponds continues. The main boat ramp is also being worked on so please use the ramp down by the beach.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Walleyes have been hitting on night crawlers and minnows drifted or trolled in deep water. Channel catfish have been biting on liver, night crawlers and cut bait.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial presentations in the morning hours. Bluegills are being caught in the evening on small jigs.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Crappies have been hitting on small jigs fished around timber in deep water. Channel catfish are biting on night crawlers and liver.

Lake Keomah (Mahaska): Channel catfish have been biting on night crawlers. Largemouth bass have been hitting crankbaits and other artificials during the evening.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Catfishing has been slow. A few anglers are picking up catfish on dead shad and dip baits. Crappie fishing has been slow. A few crappies are being caught in the deeper brush piles.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing has been fair to good for 9-inch fish. Crappies are biting on jigs and minnows fished around deeper brush piles throughout the lake.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): A few channel catfish have been caught in the lake. Anglers are reminded that minnows may not be used at Diamond Lake.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): White bass fishing continues to be good at night on top-water baits. Largemouth bass fishing continues to be good on rubber worms.

Hannen and Rodgers (Benton): Catfish have been biting well on stink bait at both lakes. Anglers are also catching a few bluegills. Anglers are reminded that minnows may not be used at both lakes.

Wapsipinicon River (Jones): Walleye and smallmouth bass have been biting well on crawfish and leeches around deeper pools.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): The water levels seem to have stabilized. Look for the fishing to start improving.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Fishing continues to be good in the Mississippi River as water levels remain steady and clarity is good. Water temperature is 78 degrees. Catfish, freshwater drum, northern pike, largemouth and smallmouth bass are all being caught in good numbers along with several other species. Catfishing in **Pools 9-15** has been good to excellent. Stink bait is the preferred method, but many are being caught on worms as well. Catfishing is generally done in current areas along the main channel or larger side channels. Anchor above fallen trees, root wads and wing dams. By staying above the trees and luring the catfish out, you can avoid snagging up so often! Good catfish locations are Minnesota Slough, Big Slough and Winneshiek Slough in Pool 9; Harpers Slough, McDonald Slough and State Line Slough in Pool 10; and Cassville Slough, Picayune Chute, Jack Oak Slough, and Hurricane Chute in Pool 11. In Pools 12-14, try the main channel borders and sloughs with current for channel catfish. Flathead catfish are biting on minnows and night crawlers fished around woody structure in **Pools 12-15**. Freshwater drum (sheepshead) are being caught in excellent numbers in most areas with current. Drum can be caught using a sliding egg sinker and a hook baited with worms or crayfish fished along wing dams and side channels. If you plan to clean drum, store the freshly caught fish on ice until you fillet them. This will keep the meat firm. In addition, cut the red meat away from the rest of the fillet. If you take these two simple steps, drum are excellent eating. Northern pike are being caught in a variety of locations in backwater and side channel areas in **Pools 9-11** and off the wing dams and mouths of cold-water tributary streams in **Pools 12-15**. White spinner baits fished near the shore near the wing dams often work well. Largemouth bass fishing has been very good in **Pools 9-15** and good in **Pools 12-15**. These fish are being caught on a variety of lures, but the traditional tube jigs, crankbaits and spinner baits are working well. Big Slough and DeSoto Bay have been good in **Pool 9**. In **Pool 10**, McGregor, Norwegian and Methodist lakes have been excellent and Cassville Slough and Bertom lakes in **Pool 11** are good. Fish along the main channel borders with riprap and a slight current in **Pools 12-15** or entice a largemouth using a top-water lure or spinner bait fished along the weed lines or woody structure in the backwater lakes. Largemouth are generally found in backwater lakes on the Mississippi, but as water temperatures warm up and the river levels recede, the fish move out into the current. Smallmouth bass are also being caught in good numbers in **Pools 9-15**. Smallmouth are found in swift current areas with rock. These areas are generally associated with the main channel habitats, including bank stabilization rock, day markers or wing dam habitats. Spinners and crankbaits are the lure of choice for these feisty fish. Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair in the backwater areas of **Pools 12-15**. Crappies are usually found in submerged brush piles in areas with no current and minnows and/or jigs work best. Bluegills are biting on a piece of night crawler or wax worm. Walleye fishing has been fair on the wing dams and flats in **Pools 12-15** using jigs and 3-ways tipped with a worm or leech. The Brown's Lake Access in **Pool 13** is shallow and boaters are encouraged to use caution when entering!

Upper Iowa River (Howard, Winneshiek and Allamakee): Smallmouth bass fishing is good to excellent on a variety of lures and baits—top-water lures, crankbaits, jigs, night crawlers, etc.

Turkey River (Howard, Winneshiek and Fayette): Smallmouth bass fishing is good to excellent on a variety of lures and baits. Walleye fishing is also good to excellent on jigs and crankbaits.

Cedar River (Floyd and Mitchell): Channel catfishing is good on cut baits and prepared stink bait. Walleye and northern pike are biting on jigs and crankbaits.

Cedar (Black Hawk) and **Wapsipinicon rivers** (Buchanan): Channel catfish are excellent on stink baits, dead chubs, night crawlers, crayfish, and chicken liver—just about anything! Anglers having the best success are fishing in shallow riffle areas. Walleye fishing is good on jigs and crankbaits.

Shell Rock River (Butler): Anglers are catching walleyes on jigs and crankbaits.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): Excellent for channel catfish on a variety of baits. Walleye fishing is good on crankbaits and jigs. Smallmouth bass fishing in the catch-and-release area below the Delhi Dam is good using top-water lures and spinner baits.

Lake Delhi (Delaware): Fishing for channel catfish is excellent on stink baits and night crawlers. Bluegill and crappies are being picked up around structure. Bluegills are hitting on red worms or wax worms and crappies prefer jigs and/or minnows.

Lake Hendricks (Howard): Bluegill and largemouth bass are biting along the weed edges.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek): Largemouth bass fishing is good on plastics fished along the weed edges and around submerged trees.

Trout fishing and stream conditions are excellent! For current trout stocking information, contact the Big Spring Hatchery at 563-245-1699, Decorah Hatchery at 563-382-3315 or Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-5736. You can also view the trout stocking calendar on-line by going to www.iowadnr.com, clicking on **Fish and Fishing** and then choosing **Favorite Pages**.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleyes are being caught throughout the lake but most are below the 14-inch length limit. Anglers are drifting or trolling with night crawler harnesses tipped with either leeches or night crawlers. Yellow perch fishing is fair. Anglers continue to catch perch in 18 to 20 feet of water using wigglers and ice fishing type lures. Crappies, ranging from 7 to 10 inches, are being caught while perch fishing. Fish around Big Stoney Point, south of cottonwood point and south of the footbridge.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers are catching bluegills in 15 to 20 feet of water using a bobber and leech in Echo Bay, Hayward's Bay and Sandpiper's Cove. Some smallmouth are being caught on leeches in Echo Bay and Hayward's Bay. Anglers are catching walleyes along the weed lines using leeches and a bobber and crankbaits, and using leeches in Echo Bay and Hayward's Bay. Yellow perch are being caught trolling a jig tipped with a wiggler in deeper water in Echo Bay and Hayward's Bay.

East Okoboji (Dickinson): Some channel catfish are biting on stink bait or crawdads at the north end. There have been some nice catches of legal sized walleyes in East Lake. Trolling spinners and night crawlers off the weed lines when there is a good chop on the water is producing fish. Troll crankbaits for bottom hugging fish. Some yellow perch are being caught at the north end.

Little Sioux River (Dickinson and Clay): Anglers are catching nice stringers of channel catfish on dip baits and night crawlers. Fresh cut bait or sour clams will produce larger catfish, especially after dark.

Lake Pahoja (Lyon): Channel catfish fishing continues to be good using chicken liver around the brush piles. Fishing is good throughout the lake for small crappie and bluegill using a small piece of night crawler or wax worm.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Yellow bass are being caught around the rock reefs, drifting the north shore and off some of the public docks. Use minnows and cut bait for the best action. Try different spots until locating a school of fish. Channel catfish are good using chicken liver, stink bait and chubs. Fish the rush beds in the west end, rock reefs and the wind blown shore lines for the best action.

Little Wall Lake (Hamilton): Channel catfish are biting on stink bait and chicken liver. Bluegills are hitting small jigs and pieces of night crawler.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Channel catfish are good on chicken liver. Anglers are catching carp on dough balls.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Fishing is excellent for 2 to 3 pound channel catfish using dead shad. White bass are excellent using fresh shad and twister tails from shore.

Yellow Smoke (Crawford): Fishing is good for 7-inch bluegills using small jigs and wax worms.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Bass are being caught in 15 to 20 feet of water using an assortment of lures. The bass have moved to cooler water. The best walleye action is during the evening hours. Fish for crappies and bluegills in 10 to 15 feet of water during the evening using a small hook and piece of worm.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Green Valley (Union): Channel catfish fishing is good using liver, night crawlers or cut baits.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Channel catfish can be caught using suspended night crawlers or liver off the steep points.

Three Mile (Union): Walleyes are good using leeches, night crawlers, or crankbaits on roadbed and main deeper points. Channel catfish are still being caught on night crawlers or cut bait off the rocks and around the fish cleaning station. Largemouth bass fishing is good throughout the lake. Bluegills are on the outside of the weed-lines or on the tops of the fish mounds. Some crappies can be caught drift fishing deeper water or over the top of the brush piles.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish fishing is still good on cut bait and liver. Walleye fishing is good using leaches on the deeper points. Anglers are catching a lot of yellow bass.

Little River (Decatur): Channel catfish is best using cut bait and liver in the bays. Some crappies can be caught drift fishing open water.

Icaria (Adams): One to 4-pound channel catfish are still being caught everywhere using cut bait and liver.

Viking (Montgomery): Crappie fishing is fair using tube jigs tipped with a minnow or minnows suspended from a bobber around brush piles, or suspended in 8 to

10 feet of water. Catfish fishing has been good on liver. Bluegills are fair with jigs and night crawlers.

Cold Springs (Cass): Catfish are being caught on liver and prepared baits, especially toward evening.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Channel catfish are good using liver or prepared baits.

Greenfield (Adair): Fishing is fair for 8-inch bluegills using jigs and/or night crawlers along shoreline and around brush piles. Fishing is good for channel catfish in the early morning and evening hours using liver.

Orient (Adair): Channel catfish are good using prepared stink bait or cut fish. Largemouth bass fishing is fair.

Nodaway (Adair): Bluegills are biting on jigs/night crawlers along the shore and around structure. Fishing is good for channel catfish in the early morning and evening hours using liver.

Morman Trail (Adair): Channel catfish are good in the early morning and evening hours using liver. Largemouth bass fishing is fair.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is good for 8-inch crappies on jigs/minnows around brush piles. Channel catfish are good on liver or prepared baits. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Willow (Harrison): Largemouth bass fishing is good, primarily for sub-legal size fishing, using a variety of baits. Anglers are catching 1.5 pound channel catfish on liver, night crawlers and prepared baits.

Desoto Bend (Harrison): Anglers are catching channel catfish using liver and prepared baits.

Farm Ponds (SW Iowa): Largemouth bass and channel catfish fishing is good. Anglers are reminded that permission needs to be granted to fish on private farm ponds.

Big Creek Lake (Polk): Bluegill fishing has been good using pieces of worm on 1/32-ounce jigs and slip bobbers. Channel catfish fishing has been good to excellent using cut and stink baits. Largemouth bass and walleye fishing has been good, with most fish below legal length limits, 18 inches and 15 inches respectively.

Beaver Lake (Dallas): Bluegill fishing is fair, with the best areas around the woody structure along the shorelines.

Don Williams (Boone): Channel catfish fishing is fair using night crawlers in the north end of the lake. Largemouth bass fishing has been fair using top-water lures around shoreline structure. Bluegill fishing is good using small jigs and worms.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been good using night crawlers or wax worms. Largemouth bass – primarily sub-legal size fish – are being caught on crankbaits. Channel catfish fishing has been good on night crawlers, stink baits and chicken liver.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegills have been caught using traditional baits and lures. Largemouth bass fishing is fair using crankbaits, although as in Lake Ahquabi, most fish are sub-legal.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie fishing has been fair for boat anglers in deeper water using jigs and minnows. Channel catfish fishing has been good using night crawlers.

Easter Lake (Polk): Channel catfish fishing is good, with the majority of fish caught using stink baits. Crappie fishing has slowed, with some fish caught using jigs and minnows and/or worms.

Hickory Grove Lake (Story): Channel catfish fishing is good on stink bait. Bluegill fishing is fair using small hooks tipped with worms. Largemouth bass fishing has been fair with most anglers using top-water lures.

Saylorville Lake (Polk): Walleye fishing is fair using crankbaits and shad raps. Channel catfish fishing has picked up using traditional baits such as stink baits, cut baits and night crawlers. **Tailwater:** White bass fishing has been fair using leadheads and twister tails. Channel catfish have been caught using traditional baits.

Lake Red Rock (Marion): White bass/wipers have been good using rattler type lures. Channel catfish fishing has been good along shorelines using stink baits, cut baits and night crawlers. A few anglers have been very successful crappie fishing in the larger coves. **Tailwater:** White bass/wipers have been good. Channel catfish fishing has also been good using traditional baits.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

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